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Emotions that facilitate language learning: The positive-broadening power of the imagination¹

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Abstract

The imagination is powerful, in part, because of the emotions that can be activated by imagining future states. Imagined future states are a key feature of the L2 self-system proposed by Dörnyei, and emotion may be the key to the motivational quality of the imagined future self. In particular, this paper focuses on positive anticipated and anticipatory emotions related to language learning. It is argued that, in general, positive emotion has a different function from negative emotion; they are not opposite ends of the same spectrum. Based on the work of Fredrickson, we argue that positive emotion facilitates the building of resources because positive emotion tends to broaden a person's perspective, opening the individual to absorb the language. In contrast, negative emotion produces the opposite tendency, a narrowing of focus and a restriction of the range of potential language input. This article draws a framework for finding a balance between the positive-broadening and negative-narrowing emotions in the language classroom,

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and beyond. The emotion system is an engine for the positive-broadening power of the imagination.

Keywords: imagination, motivation, self, emotions, positive-broadening

Imagine there's no heaven, it's easy if you try
– John Lennon

Imagination is powerful. Songwriters, poets, politicians, and motivational speakers draw upon the potency of imagination to reveal truths about the present and propel us toward their version of the future. Imagination works best when it activates emotion; the poets have known this all along. As language teachers, learners and researchers we have yet to fully appreciate the value of imagination and the power of emotion in our accounts of the learning process. Our goal in this paper is to establish a theoretical foundation on which to build a more complete understanding of the ways in which affect and imagination contribute to language learning. After laying out our conceptual foundation by characterizing emotions through a variety of defining features, we attempt to demonstrate how teachers can create classroom and task conditions that draw upon the power of their learners' imaginations to both provoke essential reactions and optimize the cognition that modifies learners' emotional schemas. When learners feel the burden of negative-narrowing emotion, it is our goal to help teachers find ways to transform it into positive-broadening, empowering resources.

Characterizing Emotion

Defining a concept like emotion is not an especially easy task. Common usage seems to arrive at a circular definition where emotions are defined as feelings and feelings are defined as emotional states. Johnmarshall Reeve (2005, p. 294) offers a good discussion of emotion and its definitional issues. Reeve settles on a multidimensional definition: "Emotions are short-lived, feeling-arousal-purposive-expressive phenomena that help us adapt to the opportunities and challenges we face during important life events." The feeling component reflects the subjective experience we so often equate with emotion. The second component, arousal, has been the topic of considerable research, successfully finding unique patterns of physical responses that accompany certain specific emotions, as when heart rate and blood pressure increase during anxiety. The third component is purposive, reflecting the goal-directedness of emo-

tion. Finally, the expressive component gives emotion its social and communicative dimension; for example, involuntary (unlearned) facial expressions are associated with universal emotions and tend to be easy to read. But emotions must be understood to be more than the sum of these parts. An emotion is emergent from the coordination of these four aspects of experience.

Anxiety is perhaps the most studied emotion in second language acquisition (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Consistent with Reeve's definition, language anxiety can be understood as an emergent, coordinated emotion with feeling, arousal, purposive and expressive phenomena. The feelings associated with language anxiety, well described in qualitative research, include tension, nervousness, worry, dread, upset, and similar terms. The physical dimension also is present – the heart races, the body sweats, the hands tremble, and there is a sinking feeling in the stomach (Reeve, 2005). This is a coordinated reaction governed by the interaction of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, often called the "fight-or-flight" response. The purpose of a fight-or-flight response in language learning might not be readily apparent, but can be found just below the surface. The feelings associated with language anxiety typically precede avoidance or escape; we want to leave a situation that makes us anxious as a means of self-protection. We are at risk in a situation where we cannot understand what is being said. If we do not understand the people around us, we are subjected to a primitive question: How can we fit into, and avoid being rejected by this group? The expression of language anxiety is a voluntary and/or involuntary call for help, a cue to the other people in the situation that the anxious learner is or might be in distress.

A long standing question in emotion research has focused on the number of emotions. In response to this line of enquiry, a small number of discrete, core, basic emotions have been identified cross-culturally. Paul Ekman's (1972) work on facial recognition has shown that facial displays of basic emotions can be correctly interpreted across cultures. Robert Plutchick (2011) emphasizes an evolutionary perspective to identify emotions that are foundational, common across species and divisions within a species (e.g., cultures). According to Reeve (2005), the list of emotions generated by this approach has featured mostly negative emotions (fear, anger, disgust, sadness) with one or two positive emotions (joy, interest). Perhaps the appeal of seeking to identify the basic emotions is that the number has been rather small, between three and eleven different emotions, depending on how the classification is developed.

An alternative to the search for basic emotions is a search for emotion words in the lexicon. A lexical-cognitive perspective emphasizes the role of social, contextual and attribution processes in defining the many shades of emotional experience. A woman might love learning French, but that is not the

same love she has for her father, her mother, her eldest daughter, the cat, playing bridge, and eating chocolate. Some core emotion in these cases (love, affection, care) might be similar but the shades of interpretation and meaning are very different and integral to the experience of each type of love. Dewaele (2010) emphasizes this dimension of emotion when he discusses the difficulties learners encounter in expressing emotions across languages. Pavlenko (2002) also discusses how bilinguals' conversation about emotion evolves through the process of second language socialization as evidenced by examples of second language influence on first language performance.

Caroll Izard's (2011) recent work on differential emotions has offered a valuable distinction between basic or "first-order" emotions and more complex emotion schemas.

First-order emotions require only the minimal cognitive processes of perceiving and imaging in order to trigger a rapid and sometimes automatic action. These processes may often occur without reportable awareness, particularly in early development. In contrast, emotion schemas always involve interactions among emotion feelings and higher order cognition – thoughts, strategies, and goals that complement and guide responding to the emotion experience. (p. 372)

Izard (2011) identified the first-order emotions as interest, enjoyment/happiness/contentment, sadness, anger, disgust, fear, and possibly contempt. Higher-order emotion schemas can be simple or complex combinations of emotions, mixed with cognitive and self-regulation elements, that allow for interpretation and continual interaction with the surrounding context. Complex emotion schemas are similar to what Epstein (1993) calls vibes, part of the lower-level experiential system, as differentiated from the higher-level rational, logical, cognitive system. Vibes are subtle feeling states that occur instantly, automatically, and often below the level of conscious awareness. "A typical sequence of behavior is that an event occurs; the experiential system scans its memory banks for related events; and vibes from the past events are produced that influence conscious thoughts and behavior" (Epstein, 1993, p. 323). Except in unusual circumstances (e.g., a time of war, natural disaster, or intense fear), first-order emotions are rarely experienced directly. Adults', and even adolescents', day-to-day emotional experience features conscious complex emotion schemas and/or subtle vibes, having been shaped since childhood. The proximity of the neural circuitry for emotion and cognition suggests that even when first-order emotions are activated, they begin being shaped by cognition and self-regulation processes almost immediately. In turn, the emotion system shapes cognition, sometimes with and sometimes without our conscious awareness.

It is important to emphasize the distinction between emotions and two related concepts, mood and temperament. Whereas emotions are short-lived reactions to personally significant events, moods are longer-lasting, more diffuse experiences; their origins in recent experience might be difficult for a person to identify. Moods do not carry the potential for specific action that emotions do, partly because moods operate in the background and emotions in the foreground of conscious experience. Moods are the more common experience, with each day being shaped in subtle ways by one or more moods. More broadly, temperament is a stable tendency for an individual to experience certain moods and emotions. Temperament is a personality-level construct that is often linked to physiology. Using anxiety as an example, Spielberger (1966) differentiated the emotional experience of anxiety at a specific time (state anxiety) from the long term tendency or disposition to experience anxiety reactions (trait anxiety).

The Positive-Broadening and Negative-Narrowing Power of Emotion

Recent developments in the literature have begun to highlight the nature of positive emotions, long neglected by researchers in the area. Barbara Fredrickson (2001, 2003, 2006) has proposed the “broaden and build” theory of positive emotion that clearly differentiates the functions of positive and negative emotions. Fredrickson acknowledges that the action tendencies produced by negative emotions powerfully dispose a person to a specific action (e.g., disgust leads to rejection as in spitting out spoiled food). Fredrickson (2003) proposes that positive emotions carry a different implication for ongoing activity:

[The broaden and build] theory states that certain discrete positive emotions – including joy, interest, contentment, pride, and love – although phenomenologically distinct, all share the ability to broaden people’s momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources. (p. 219)

The broaden and build theory suggests that positive emotions function in at least five important ways (Fredrickson, 2006). First, positive emotions tend to broaden people’s attention and thinking, leading to exploration and play, new experiences and new learning. Second, positive emotion helps to undo the lingering effects of negative emotional arousal. A related, third function of positive emotion is to promote resilience by triggering productive reactions to stressful events, such as improving cardiovascular recovery and making salient feelings of happiness and interest while under stress. Fourth, positive emotion promotes building personal resources, such as social bonds built by smiles,

intellectual resources honed during creative play, and even when young animals practice self-preservation maneuvers during rough-and-tumble play. Fifth, positive emotions can be part of an upward spiral toward greater well-being in the future, essentially the vicious cycle in reverse. A positive spiral is possible because the acquisition of resources facilitated by positive emotions endure long after the emotional reaction has ended. That is, rather than simply being the absence of negativity, positive emotions actively produce health and well-being (Fredrickson, 2001).

If negative and positive emotions function differently, and everyday emotion schemas include both positive and negative emotions simultaneously, it seems best to conceptualize emotion along two separate dimensions, positive-broadening and negative-narrowing. The potentially disruptive effects of negative emotion, especially language anxiety, have been well described in the literature. High anxiety tends to lead to closing off, withdrawal, and self-protection behavior (Ely, 1986; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). However, the potentially powerful effects of positive emotions have not been widely studied in second language acquisition. To what extent do things like perseverance over the course of language learning, bouncing back from embarrassing L2 gaffs (real or imagined), and dealing with the threat to identity of subtractive bilingualism depend on positive emotional resources? More specifically, it has been argued that noticing language input, and an awareness of languages in a multilingual context, significantly promotes learning. The language awareness approach holds as one of its basic tenets that learning is enhanced when learners are “affectively engaged and when they willingly invest energy and attention in the learning process” (Bolitho, Carter, Hughes, Ivanic, Masuhara, & Tomlinson, 2003, p.252). Bolitho et al. (2003) further suggest:

Sensitivity to affect in teachers may influence lesson and course design in a profound way through choice of texts and activities, and may help them to ‘unblock’ failing learners by encouraging them to respond affectively as well as cognitively to language inputs of various kinds. Affective engagement with language in use also has the considerable advantage of stimulating a fuller use of the resources of the brain. Positive attitudes, self-esteem, and emotive involvement help to fire neural paths between many areas of the brain, and to achieve the multi-dimensional representation needed for deep processing of language.

MacIntyre (2007) has recently noted that ambivalent emotion is prevalent in language learning. The two-dimensional view of emotion proposed in the present article, with positive-broadening and negative-narrowing continua, makes it easier to discuss ambivalence. Although there are many times when the emotional component of the individual's ongoing stream of activity will be

congruent with the surrounding context (fear and running away; love and cuddling; excitement and celebrating), there will be other times when emotions function to oppose what we are doing (fear and skydiving; anxiety and test taking; embarrassment and speaking a second language). When emotions are in conflict with ongoing actions, when we have to overcome an emotional reaction in order to take action, we are in a state of ambivalence. The perception of a conflicted emotional state reflects a complex, underlying motivational process. When emotions motivate action, conflicted or ambivalent emotions produce instability that might be best understood as a coordination of approach and avoidance tendencies. Rather than looking at emotion as approach *versus* avoidance, we can discuss interesting moments of approach *and* avoidance, to capture in theory the tensions experienced by learners so that pedagogy can actively deal with the issues raised by affective reactions, and better understand the breadth of facilitative and debilitating emotional processes.

Language learning is a long term process, and the conceptualization of time has become more relevant to motivation theory; a sense of time is a central feature of both the L2 self system (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009) and a focus on possible future selves (MacIntyre, Mackinnon, & Clement, 2009). With respect to future-oriented emotions, Baumgartner, Pieters, and Bagozzi (2008) offer a potentially important distinction between anticipatory emotion and anticipated emotion:

On the one hand, a person may currently experience an emotion due to the prospect of a desirable or undesirable future event (i.e., hope or fear). These affective reactions are *anticipatory* emotions, because they are currently experienced due to something that could happen in the future. On the other hand, a person may imagine experiencing certain emotions in the future once certain desirable or undesirable future events have occurred (e.g., anticipated joy or regret). These affective reactions are *anticipated* emotions. (p. 685, emphasis added)

Baumgartner et al. (2008) state that there are two prototypical categories of positive and negative anticipatory emotions: hope and fear (respectively). These are the same categories used in possible selves research: the hoped-for and feared future self (Markus & Nurius, 1986; MacIntyre et al., 2009)

We argue that the motivational force behind possible future selves stems in large part from anticipatory and anticipated emotions. In addition, we propose that the formation of possible future L2 selves would be facilitated by the positive-broadening power of anticipatory emotion. To wit, one might imagine speaking fluently on an upcoming international vacation or important future business trip, but unless this thought arouses positive emotion schemas such as interest in the local culture (to facilitate broadening language skill) or a negative emotion schema such as fear of failure (to narrow

the focus to the language learning task at hand), then the possible future self seems impotent. Drawing on an analogy with the well-established literature on cognitive dissonance (Cooper & Fazio, 1984), the discrepancy between the present and future self has motivating force only to the extent that (a) the discrepancy is noticed and (b) it arouses an emotional reaction. The cognitive dissonance literature has shown that people can have dissonant attitudes and not care too much about resolving the discrepancy; likewise, people can think how nice it might be to learn another language without feeling much of a need to do so. But when learners do feel excitement, interest, or a love of learning, the positive-broadening power of emotion comes to the fore.

Pedagogical Implications Concerning Emotion

To assist teachers in putting this theory into practice, we provide guidelines that set up a framework for language classroom activities that draw upon the theoretical bases above and attempt to channel the power of positive-broadening and negative-narrowing emotions. It is important to keep in mind that emotional reactions are semi-controllable; this is both bad news and good news. The bad news is that emotions sometimes just happen, they are reactions, and there can be an unpredictable quality to them. The good news is that whereas emotion is often an involuntary reaction, it is possible for teachers to approach influencing students' emotion in at least two ways: (a) to set up conditions to provoke a reaction; and (b) to work with the cognition that modifies the emotional schema.

One of the essentials to effectively capitalizing on teachers' potential influence on emotions is the invocation of learners' imaginations. The imagination is a powerful route with which to influence emotions, both present (anticipatory) and future (anticipated). Emotions are central to energizing a reduction of the discrepancies between students' present and future selves. To demonstrate the power of imagination for modifying cognition, we draw upon the well-established systematic desensitization technique, in which the intensity of negative emotions, including anxiety, is lessened in a controlled, safe setting. Furthermore, we provide some ideas from positive psychology that will encourage play and exploration; promote joy, interest, and contentment; create resiliency and community-building; stimulate learners to find constructive meaning and long-term benefits to their actions, and advance flourishing social networks. Recent research shows not only *that* these emotions facilitate learning but *how* these emotions facilitate learning. In providing pedagogical guidelines that draw upon the power of the imagination in the elaboration of possible selves and in systemic desensitization, as well as parameters from positive psychology, we

hope to equip teachers to create positive-broadening emotional conditions for their students and modify learners' negative-narrowing reactions.

L2 Self System and Possible Selves: Using the Imagination to Provoke a Reaction

The "possible selves" paradigm (Markus & Nurius, 1986) offers teachers an interesting option for arousing language learners' emotional reactions and ways of moving them in a positive-broadening direction. In implementing this model, learners create specific, vivid representations of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming. "Possible selves are specific representations of one's self in future states, involving thoughts, images, and senses, and are in many ways the manifestations or personalized carriers, of one's goals and aspirations (and fears, of course)" (Dörnyei, 2005, p.99). These imagined possible selves must be a present reality for the individual, and frame future goals through creating vivid self-images. Through possible selves, learners create dynamic future guides that encourage action. By elaborating possible selves, integrated goals and plans for achieving them are set that include ways to translate ideas into action. "Thus, possible selves give form, meaning, structure, and direction to one's hopes and threats, thereby inciting and directing purposeful behavior. The more vivid and elaborate the possible self, the more motivationally effective it is expected to be" (Dörnyei, 2005, p.100). Furthermore, efficacy is increased when the positive image is linked with images of potential negative outcomes if the desired state is not reached, creating a dynamic balance between what one hopes and what one fears (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989).

Building on the possible selves model, Dörnyei (2005) proposed the L2 self system is a broad construct composed of three dimensions: the ideal L2 self, which incorporates the future vision one has of oneself; the ought-to self, which focuses on duties obligated by external forces; and the L2 learning experience, which relates to the immediate learning environment and considers variables like the teacher, curriculum, peer group and previous experience with success. In essence, the ideal self is the person learners would like to become and the ought-to self is the persona created to meet expectations and avoid possible negative outcomes. The L2 learning environment is conceptualized differently from the other two self-guides as it is connected to the present (rather than future) motivation inspired by previous experience working together with the immediate learning environment and necessitates ongoing activity. The central hypothesis behind this model is that if progress in the target language is linked to one's ideal and ought-to selves, motivation to

learn the language is enhanced because of the learner's psychological desire to reduce the discrepancy between current and possible future selves (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). In other words, teachers using activities based on this model can set up the conditions to arouse an emotional reaction in their learners with an inherent positive-broadening direction.

Dörnyei (2009, p.18) lists six specific conditions that enrich or thwart the motivational force of the ideal and ought-to selves that help prepare a framework for pedagogical activities.

- The ease with which individuals can create an effective possible ideal self varies from person to person, and once established, a self-image must be elaborate and vivid to be an effective motivator – in fact, the more elaborate and vivid, the better.
- Possible selves only have value when the creator indeed believes their attainment is possible and likely; possible selves are not pure fantasy, vague wishes, or dreams.
- Harmony between the ideal and ought-to selves, when a learner's social and personal identities may be brought into alignment increases the efficacy of possible selves as a motivational tool.
- Activation of the possible self in working memory can be prompted by reminders, classroom exercises, and self-relevant actions, or learners can be taught to purposefully summon possible selves in reaction to external events.
- In order to go from potential to action, learners must have accompanying procedural strategies that consist not only of an imagery element, but also an inventory of applicable plans and procedures.
- Finally, for ideal and ought-to selves to function optimally, they need to be offset by the impact of the feared self. Maximum motivational effectiveness is reached when the ideal self is balanced with a counteracting feared possible self that focuses on the potential results that could befall if the original image fails.

In terms of the practical application of the L2 self system, Dörnyei (2009) lists six strategic implications. The first strategy is to raise awareness of the construction of the ideal L2 self; creating the vision. This process is more like "awareness raising and guided selection from the multiple aspirations, dreams, desires, and so on that the students have already entertained in the past" (p. 33). It also entails intensifying the learners' consciousness about the importance of ideal selves, asking them to revisit the possible selves they have imagined in the past, and acting as influential models. The second strategy strengthens the vision of the possible selves through imagery enhancement, such as through the invocation of creative or guided imagery. The idea is to

have learners both boost their controllability of the image and make it more vivid. Making the ideal L2 self plausible through substantiating the vision is the third strategy. This strategy is based on the need for a sense of realistic expectations and built on the premise that the greater the prospect of goal achievement, the higher the degree of positive motivation. The fourth strategy encompasses keeping the vision alive through activation of the L2 ideal self. Dörnyei (p. 37) urges teachers to “provide an engaging framework that keeps the enthusiasts going and the less-than-enthusiasts thinking.” Fifthly, by developing an action plan, teachers can help learners operationalize their visions. These self-guiding images are only effective when accompanied by a set of concrete action plans and continual self-evaluation. Once in place, plans need to be reviewed and kept up to date. Ineffective plans are modified; successful plans celebrated. The final strategy concerns counterbalancing the positive vision by considering the repercussions of failure. For optimal benefit to be squeezed from the possible selves model, learners need to regularly activate their “dreaded” selves.

Table 1 Dörnyei’s qualities of the L2 self and strategic directions for imagery

No.	Quality (of a motivating L2 self)	Strategy (what can we do)
1	Vivid	Raise awareness of L2 self
2	Possible or likely	Guide the imagery
3	Internally consistent	Instantiate the L2 self
4	Active, salient	Remind learners of the L2 future self
5	Comes with a roadmap, action plan	Ongoing planning for achieving the vision
6	Ambivalent, positive and negative	Highlight not only the benefits of success but (less often) the costs of failure

The qualities of the L2 self, and the strategic directions suggested by Dörnyei (2009) are consistent with emotion theory laid out above. The activation of possible selves arouses both anticipatory and anticipated emotion. Phrases such as “Imagine how proud you will be when you graduate” or “Imagine the feeling of representing your company/country/group at an international convention” arouse specific anticipated feelings in the future, as well as an emotionally energizing present context. Inherent in these types of interventions is the ambivalence of possible selves – there is something important at stake. Imagining pride at graduation implies the possibility that one might not make it that far; imagining a successful international convention implies, in the background at least, potential failure on the same stage. One must be careful to harness the broadening power of positive emotion without tipping the scales too far toward the implied negative dimension. Effectively guiding imagery might take advantage of the “positivity

ratio." Fredrickson and Losada's (2005) research suggests that, in general, well functioning persons have a ratio of between 3 and 11 positive emotions to each negative one. This seems as good a guide as any for balancing the positive-broadening and negative-narrowing emotions, and shows the importance of concentrating on the positive side of the ledger. Differences among individual learners, whose temperament may lead them to dispositional optimism or pessimism, must be taken into account. For example, we suggest that the optimist might need to be reminded more often than the pessimist of the need for a narrow focus on tasks, from time to time.

Working out the balance of positive and negative, anticipatory and anticipated emotion, can be facilitated by considering the discrepancy between the present and future self and asking whether the learner is concerned about adding a new self-dimension or maintaining an existing one? MacIntyre et al. (2009) propose two questions: (a) Does the creator of the possible self actually see this self as potentially viable in the future?; and (b) Does that self describe them presently? There are four possible combinations in answer to these questions; two could potentially enhance positive-broadening emotion and two are far less likely to support motivated behavior. If an element of the present self is perceived as being relevant in the future, there will be ongoing maintenance and development because the future self is close to the present self; imagery can be concrete and goals close in time. However, if key self-related factors are not currently part of the self concept, but could conceivably be added, the self-development is likely best described in more vague terms and along a longer time line. The other two options incorporate the thinking that a present self is not expected to continue and will not therefore stimulate positive-broadening behavior. The answers to these questions are important because for possible selves to be productive, the imager must have a plan of action to achieve the goals and not just be a "feel good" strategy. "Thus, it is important to find out how likely participants consider a possible self to be; a highly unlikely possible self probably will have little relation to motivation" (MacIntyre et al., 2009, p. 197).

These strategic implications bring us back to our original premise, that learners who successfully invoke their imaginations to notice the discrepancy between their present and future selves, and between their feared and ideal selves, will experience an emotional reaction that can then be modified through cognition to act as a positive-broadening motivator. One well studied example of modifying emotion through cognition is systematic desensitization, a technique that lessens the intensity of negative emotions, including anxiety, and returns learners' sense of empowerment. Teachers can facilitate the language learning process by encouraging their learners to chan-

nel negative-narrowing emotion into positive-broadening emotion by teaching relaxation techniques and then consequently guiding learners through a structured series of increasingly anxiety-provoking activities.

Systemic Desensitization: Using the Imagination to Modify Emotional Schema through Cognition

Pavlov's experiments with his infamous salivating dogs introduced the world to the notions of classical conditioning and conditioned and unconditioned responses. What Pavlov discovered was that when he gave the dog food (unconditioned stimulus), this led to an unconditioned response (salivation), and when he consistently paired a conditioned response (a bell) with an unconditioned stimulus (food), he received what now had become for the dog a conditioned response (salivation). The systematic desensitization guidelines are the reverse of classical conditioning – they use counter-conditioning. In essence, we aspire to reduce the intensity of conditioned negative-narrowing emotional responses that individuals associate with language learning by replacing it with a relaxation response when confronted with the negatively conditioned stimulus. In the guidelines below, we concentrate on transforming the specific negative-narrowing emotion of language anxiety. Proponents of systematic desensitization advocate that contact with the trigger(s) producing the anxiety is the critical component of treatment, and that systematic desensitization is merely the medium through which affected individuals gain exposure. Desensitization for language learning anxiety may work for some learners because, put simply, a learner's language anxiety response to the imagined or anticipated situation closely resembles his/her anxiety response to the real situation. Thus, when language learners feel completely comfortable and relaxed when *imagining* the foreign language classroom or interacting in the target language, their *real* encounters have a chance to be progressively less anxiety-provoking. Systemic desensitization activities are grouped into three consecutive steps: (a) construction of a hierarchy chart; (b) relaxation training; and (c) desensitization sessions.

In the first step, the construction of the anxiety hierarchy, learners create their own individualized list of situations relating to language learning to which they react with varying degrees of anxiety. These may range from giving a public presentation in the target language to being called upon by the teacher to respond orally to a question in class. The most powerful triggers should be located at the bottom of the list with the least disturbing ones at the top. As learners work through the list in the next two steps, they will begin with the least anxiety provoking triggers and work progressively through the hierarchy

until they attain the last item – the trigger they define as most powerfully anxiety-provoking. A sample hierarchy is included in Table 2.

Table 2 Sample hierarchy for desensitization training

Feeling comfortable	
1	Using my first language to clarify a L2 grammar point
2	Doing fill-in-the-blank grammar exercises in the target language with an open book
3	Conversing in the target language with a close friend who is at my proficiency level
4	Writing a journal entry in the target language
5	Being called upon in language class when I am unprepared
6	Making a mistake in front of the whole class
7	Being harshly corrected in front of the class by the teacher
8	Failing to speak the target language correctly in class and suffering the laughter of my peers
9	Conversing with a native speaker
10	Role playing in front of the class in a small group
11	Taking an oral exam in the teacher's office
12	Making a public presentation in front of the class with little opportunity for preparation
Feeling most anxious	

The next step in systemic desensitization is relaxation training. Well-managed stress opens the door to positive-broadening emotion. People enjoy mastering a challenge, overcoming an obstacle. But first, the negative-narrowing emotion must recede into the background. A state of relative relaxation targets many dimensions of human functioning: (a) Physiologically speaking, practicing relaxation slows the heart rate, lowers blood pressure, slows breathing, increases blood flow to muscles, and reduces muscle tension; (b) As concerns the cognitive system, carrying out relaxation exercises tends to improve concentration by allowing a person to shift focus away from the experiential system toward the rational system; (c) In the affective domain, relaxation techniques reduce frustration and boost confidence (<http://www.mayoclinic.com>); and (d) In terms of the social dimension, relaxed communicators usually maintain a slower pace of conversation, providing a socially accepted longer length of time to process language, and most likely produce more clearly articulated speech.

Three specific relaxation techniques to guide language learners to reduce their anxiety and tension are as follows.

- Autogenic. The first technique is called “autogenic” because it means that something comes from within oneself. In this technique, learners use both visual imagery and body awareness to reduce stress by repeating words or suggestions in their minds to relax and reduce muscle tension. For example, teachers may ask learners to imagine a peaceful setting and then

focus on controlled, relaxed breathing, slowing their heart rates or feeling different physical sensations, such as relaxing each arm or leg one by one.

- Progressive muscle relaxation. This technique encourages learners to focus slowly on tensing and then relaxing each muscle group. This will help them focus on the difference between muscle tension and relaxation and become more aware of physical sensations.
- Visualization. This approach asks learners to form mental images to take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation. Teachers guide learners in their visualization to invoke vividly as many senses as possible, including smell, sight, sound, and touch. This process may begin by teacher modeling of the visualization process. For example, teachers encourage learners to imagine relaxing at the ocean and thinking about the smell of the salt water, the sound of crashing waves and the warmth of the sun on their neck and shoulders. If students prefer, they may close their eyes and make themselves comfortable somewhere in the room. We suggest that teachers ask their learners to practice each of these relaxation techniques and choose which one is the most successful. When learners are able to relax completely in three or four minutes by quickly running through one of the procedures, then they are ready to begin the third step, the desensitization sessions.

The third step in the overall process, the desensitization sessions, culminates when an item from the personally constructed anxiety hierarchy chart from the first activity is imagined vividly and realistically in detail while feeling completely relaxed. For desensitization to be complete, the image needs to be repeatedly imagined until language learners are able to imagine it without feeling anxiety or worry. When a learner is able to imagine a given item and feel completely relaxed, he/she can then move to the next item and repeat the process.

Beyond Relaxation: Harnessing the Power of Positive Emotion

Considering the attention paid to the effects of negative emotion in general, and how emotions interfere with learning in particular, perhaps it is not surprising that the power of positive emotion has not been fully explored. The important point to make here is that positive emotion functions differently from negative emotion, and therefore the absence of a negative emotion is not the sought-after goal, we should strive to create positive mood and emotion and to prolong it whenever possible.

Fredrickson (2001) lists five specific examples of positive emotions and the tendencies they predict:

1. Joy creates the urge to play, expand boundaries, and creativity.

2. Interest generates an urge to explore, absorb new information, and develop the self.
3. Contentment allows one to savor positive events, relive them, and integrate them into our worldview.
4. Pride is associated with an urge to share accomplishments with people who are important to us, and to imagine future achievements.
5. Love is an aggregation of positive emotions (e.g., joy, interest, contentment) that leads us to deeply meaningful relationships with others, and relationships with loved ones predict all of the specific tendencies for joy, interest, contentment and pride.

These tendencies are not merely the absence of negative emotions; they have a place of their own in the language classroom. The experiences associated with positive emotions have an additional benefit, according to Fredrickson (2003), they build resources that aid in dealing with future negative events.

It is important to note that positive psychology is very clear that positive emotion is not a trivial matter; it is not simply feeling happy. Indeed, happiness, as understood in common usage, is perhaps a silly thing. The thesaurus lists synonyms for happiness that include: jovial, cheery, ecstatic, blissful, and cheerful. Yet feeling a “giddy,” bubbly hedonism is synonymous with many volatile and frivolous experiences. This is not happiness as discussed by positive psychologists such as Christopher Peterson (2006) who prefer to focus on eudaimonia, being true to oneself and living according to virtues, and the pursuit of genuine engagement. A mature form of happiness can be found in a state of flow, as discussed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990). A mathematician solving equations, a composer working hard on the notes in a melody, a scholar pouring over reams of data, an exhausted marathon runner approaching the finish line are all experiencing a form of happiness, even though they might not seem particularly cheery at the moment.

Dual Purpose Broaden and Build Theory Ideas: The Individual and Community

Our teaching guidelines so far have been characterized by the use of the imagination to provoke an affective reaction in language learners. Our last group of guidelines is inspired by the positive tenets of the broaden and build theory and draw upon the synergy of an individual's resiliency and its positive transformational effect upon the classroom community.

One of Fredrickson's (2004, p. 1367) primary proposals to broaden learners' mindsets is for teachers to encourage play and exploration which in turn promotes learners' “discovery of novel and creative actions, ideas and social

bonds." Positive emotions lead to action tendencies that differ from negative emotions. Joy ignites the urge to play, interest kindles the urge to explore, contentment awakens the urge to savor and integrate, and love inflames a continuing series of these human yearnings within protected intimate relationships. If teachers can inspire these positive-broadening emotions, the ensuing actions seem likely to boost language learning; what could be healthier for language growth than learners who want to play, explore, integrate and establish relationships (see Crooks & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 2008; Gardner, 2010)?

An additional benefit of positive emotions is the development of resiliency, or the ability to recover from stressful situations (Fredrickson, 2004). Researchers have found that resilient people use strengths such as humor, creative exploration, relaxation, and optimistic thinking as coping mechanisms that both reduce levels of stress and promote faster recovery from difficulties. The resulting task for teachers, then, would be to create a classroom environment where these strengths are not only modeled by the teacher, but also developed by learners through encouragement and the careful selection of language activities that also stimulate the development of resiliency in L2 contexts. It is important to emphasize that these personal characteristics can be taught and tailored to behavior in second language contexts.

Fredrickson's (2004) students experienced positive emotional results which built upon their personal resources when she asked them to find the positive meaning and long-term benefits within their best, worst and seemingly ordinary experiences each day. Fredrickson and Losada (2005) also taught positive emotion coping strategies by asking students to reflect upon novel ways to deal with a problem and to step back from the negative stimulus by incorporating greater objectivity. Teacher immediacy is another means of stimulating positive-broadening emotions in the classroom as it reduces the physical or psychological distance between teacher and learners and fosters affiliation. Linked to the approach/avoidance construct that assumes people generally approach things they like and avoid things they dislike or that induce fear, immediacy includes nonlinguistic approach behaviors (e.g., reducing physical distance, displaying relaxed postures and movements, using gestures, smiling, using vocal variety, and engaging in eye contact during interactions) as well as language that signals availability for communication (e.g., using personal examples, asking questions, using humor, addressing others by name, praising others, initiating discussion and using inclusive pronouns) (Gorham, 1988). Classroom activities and interaction can be utilized to both teach language and reinforce students' individual, burgeoning affective strengths in L2 contexts.

The dynamism of resiliency is evident in the fact that while resiliency resides in individuals, there is also a positive kick-back to the group. "Resilient

individuals not only cultivate positive emotions in themselves to cope, but they are also skilled at eliciting positive emotions in others, which creates a supportive social context that also facilitates coping" (Fredrickson, 2004, p. 1372). While immediate teachers develop interpersonal closeness with their students, they also have a role in team-building and socially constructing positive group emotion. By modeling in their own discourse and attitudes and in encouraging learners to use the same, teachers can create flourishing groups by using language that is overtly supportive, encouraging and appreciative, and avoids negativity, disapproval, sarcasm and cynicism. By asking questions using "inquiry" language that is aimed at exploring or examining a position, teachers and learners together can generate the dynamics necessary for high-performance teamwork. By modeling language and attitudes of "advocacy", teacher and learners together try to offer arguments in favor of another's viewpoint to limit self-absorption which ultimately narrows the functionality and flourishing of the group.

Conclusion

The elusiveness of defining such a complex concept as emotion is exhibited in the multi-faceted manner necessary to characterize it: short-lived, feeling-arousal, purposive expressive, adaptive mechanisms. How many are there? How are they represented in the lexicon? How do they interact with cognition? What is their relationship to mood and temperament? How do positive and negative emotion and ambivalence incite specific actions? What are the implications of anticipatory versus anticipated emotions? The purpose of this paper was to start a conversation concerning these questions so that as language learners, teachers and researchers, we can begin to think about how emotions work and how they can be harnessed in service to cognitive and other human goals. By seeking clarity and concreteness concerning the abstract principles surrounding emotion, we strive to understand it better in the hopes that we become happier, healthier and more productive, on both sides of the language classroom door. It is our contention that our lack of understanding of how emotion works holds us back, and although we may have a better handle on cognition, we may often be ambivalent or refuse to use this knowledge.

This discussion on emotion has direct pedagogical implications for the language classroom. In creating the learning conditions for their students, teachers will often use activities that they expect students to enjoy, find interesting, and love doing. Such teachers are working to create positive-broadening emotional conditions among their students. Teachers also will create situations that produce negative-narrowing emotions as well (e.g., ex-

aminations, requiring public speaking or presentations in the L2). Each of these has different motivational qualities and each seems likely to produce ambivalent reactions in many students. We propose that by invoking the imagination and using the power of positive emotion, teachers can provoke learners to respond to the dissonance found within their possible selves and to effectively summon the cognition that modifies the emotional schema, especially debilitating negative-narrowing reactions, using systemic desensitization and other building and broadening techniques.

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